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HABS No. RI-187

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RI,
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87-

PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Eastern Office, Division of Design and Construction
143 South Third Street
Philadelphia 6, Pennsylvania

C. MORRIS SMITH HOUSE

HABS
RI,
4-PROV,
87-

Address: 112 Benevolent Street, Providence, Providence
County, Rhode Island.

Plat 13, Lot 156.

Present Owner Mrs. Gamell Cross
and Occupant:

Present Use: Dwelling

Brief Statement This is a large brick house built c. 1895, an
of Significance: example of the revival of late eighteenth century
and early nineteenth century architectural forms.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History

1. Original and subsequent owners:

This property was platted for the heirs of Nicholas Cooke by Daniel Anthony in 1803 and recorded in 1811 . . . being two certain lots of land on the North end of the Young Orchard (so-called). . . Deed Book 33, page 374, in Providence City Hall. This piece, 112 Benevolent Street, includes numbers 42 and 43 on the said plat.

1821 Henry Bowen, assignee of Daniel C Cushing, sells for \$95 to James A Armington one undivided 1/2 part and right of dower of Susan his wife of two certain lots of land near the mansion house of Governor Fenner, being lots #42 and 43 on Young Orchard (so-called). . . Deed Book 42, page 696, in Providence City Hall.

1830 Sarah Sutton, widow of Oliver Sutton sells for \$90 to James A Armington (as administrator of the estate of Oliver Sutton) the highest bidder, one undivided 1/2 of two lots being #42 and 43 on the Young Orchard plat so-called, also dower right in same. (Deed Book 60, page 186). . . Deed Book 60, page 104 in Providence City Hall.

1893 Frederick K Armington et al sell to Benjamin B Knight "that piece of land and all buildings on the N.E. corner of Benevolent and Cooke Streets,

being lots #42 and 43 on Young Orchard Plat, being the homestead estate of the late James G. Arrington . . . Deed Book 380, page 247, in Providence City Hall.

1895 Benjamin B Knight sells to Harriet M and C Morris Smith for a certain lot of land being the same conveyed to me by Frederick J Arrington in 1893 (lots 42 and 43). . . Deed Book 399, page 10, in Providence City Hall.

1929 C W Hall, Harriet M Smith et al sell to Eliza A H Gannell. . . also two certain lots of land being lots #42 and 43 on the N end of Young Orchard. Said lots are bounded:

E by Cooke Street 109.613'; S by Benevolent St 100.25'; N by Harriet Smith

being the same conveyed by Benjamin B Knight to grantor in 1895. . . Deed Book 726, page 270, in Providence City Hall.

1929 The property was taxed to Eliza A H Gannell

1931 The property was taxed to Virginia G Cross

PROVIDENCE DIRECTORY

1824 James Arrington, cabinet maker (not numbered)
1847 to 1892 listed as #112 Benevolent. . . James Arrington

2. Date of erection: c. 1895

3. Architect: Stone, Carpenter and Willson

4. Sources of information: John Hutchins Cady, The Civic and Architectural Development of Providence 1636-1950 (Providence, Rhode Island: The Book Shop, 1957), p. 166.

Prepared by Antoinette F. Downing and Elvira Cowdey
for the Providence Preservation Society
December 1961

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement

1. Architectural character: This is a large brick house, built c. 1895, an example of the revival of late eighteenth and early nineteenth century architectural forms. It was designed by Stone, Carpenter and Wilson, noted in Providence for their "colonial revival" work. John Hutchins Gedy (The Civic and Architectural Development of Providence 1636-1950, Providence, 1957, p. 188) describes this house as "reminiscent of the works of John Morden Greene."
2. Condition of fabric: The house was renovated by the present owner, and is in excellent condition.

B. Technical Description of Exterior

1. Overall dimensions: Large, three-story main block, facing south, stubby T-shape with front leg five bays wide with center entrance, stepped-out one bay wider to west and east at the back half of main block. Three-story rear wing to northeast.
2. Foundations: Regular ashler brownstone.
3. Wall construction: Brick, running bond. Slightly projecting brick belt course between stories.
4. Porches: One-story entrance porch with fluted Corinthian columns at the front corners, similar pilasters against the house, plain entablature, modillion cornice with denticulated bed mold, iron railings at the side of the stone platform and around roof.
5. Chimneys: Two inside brick chimneys in main block with stepped-out faces above roof line. Two smaller chimneys, similar plan, in rear wing.
6. Openings:
 - a. Doorways and doors: Two leaf, paneled front door, side lights, elliptical top light, enframed with Corinthian pilasters. Paneled, top lighted, rear door.
 - b. Windows and shutters: Six over six light double hung windows, taller on first floor, graduated in height toward top. Louvered shutters. Brownstone flat arches over windows flush with the walls of the house. Tri-partite window on west side of

living room with Corinthian colonettes between the windows. Tri-partite window over entrance porch with elliptical louvered fan. Similar window with elliptical top light on north side at the main stair landing.

7. Roof:

- a. Shape: Hip roof with low, lighted monitor.
- b. Cornice: Elaborate mutule cornice with cyma recta crown mold, and beaded, denticulated bed mold. Modillion cornice on monitor.

C. Technical Description of Interior

- 1. Floor plans: Four-room, central hall plan at a large scale with central hall about 12' wide, the two rear rooms (northeast and northwest rooms) longer than the two front rooms due to T-shape plan, kitchen in rear wing at the northeast, southeast room a music room, southwest room a small parlor, northwest room a larger living room or parlor, northeast room a dining room.
- 2. Stairways: Main stairway at the rear of the central hall to third floor, U-shape, open well, open string, plain step ends, molded ramped rail, square fluted newels, four slender rectangular balusters per step.
- 3. Flooring: 2-1/2" wide board floors, stained dark.
- 4. Wall and ceiling finish: Plaster.
- 5. Doors and doorways: Raised panel doors, double doors from central hall into four principal rooms. Double molded architraves, crosseted and on plinth blocks. Paneled jambs. Broken scrolled pediments in central hall. Segmental arched pediment in living room (northwest) with floral and urn ornament on fluted pilasters.
- 6. Trim: Ceiling cornices throughout first floor: Southeast room, cavetto, fret and a flat carved band; northeast dining room, cyma recta, flat carved ornamented fascia, beaded bed mold, fret course, cyma recta, flat picture mold; central hall and northwest living room, cyma recta with smaller moldings, beaded bed mold, dentil course; southwest room, cavetto, dentil course, reed and rosette band. Chair rail throughout, mostly molded with reed and rosette band, paneled wainscot. Round-headed bookcases in living room added by present owners. Painted light colors throughout except for dark natural woodwork in northwest living room.

7. Hardware: Brass hardware on front door. Silver hardware with gold plating on first floor, butt hinges on doors, large round crystal knobs on second floor.

D. Site

1. General setting: Large level lot, northeast corner of Benevolent and Cooke Streets, residential area.
2. Enclosures: Open wood fence along sidewalks on south and west sides.
3. Outbuildings: Large, two-story brick garage at north side of lot.
4. Walks, driveways: Brick walk with brownstone steps to front porch.
5. Landscaping, gardens, etc.: Informal arrangement of shrubs, flowers and lawn around house, formal arrangement extending to rear of house behind the living room.

Prepared by Osmund R. Overby, Architect
National Park Service
December 1961